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THE NEW TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RECENT GERMAN CON-
TRIBUTIONS

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I

In the year 1874 Professor Carl Weizsäcker, the successor of Ferdinand Christian Baur, founder of the modern Tübingen school of theology, in the chair of church history at the University of Tübingen, published a German translation of the New Testament,¹ which has since become a classic among German ministers and students of the New Testament. It is a translation which renders the original text in such a manner that commentaries are almost unnecessary, except for historical and archæological purposes.

Encouraged by the great success of this edition, the enterprising firm of J. C. B. Mohr, now in Tübingen, arranged with Professor E. Kautzsch, of Halle, erstwhile colleague of Weizsäcker's at Tübingen, to publish a new translation of the Old Testament in the spirit of the latter's work, enlarging, however, its scope by adding a general preface to the whole translation, critical introductions to each book, and a few linguistic and textual explanations. To accomplish his task satisfactorily, Professor Kautzsch associated with himself a number of the most prominent and active Old Testament scholars, and published, in the early nineties, his now so well-known translation, of which a second edition was put out in 1896.² The general introduction to the whole volume, and the special introductions to the individual parts and books, have also been published separately, and were soon translated into English, and thus made accessible to English and American Bible students not familiar with the language of Luther's fatherland. This volume is acknowledged by the most

¹ *Das Neue Testament*, übersetzt von C. Weizsäcker. Tenth edition, 1904.

² *Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments*, übersetzt und herausgegeben von E. Kautzsch. Zweite, mehrfach berichtigte Ausgabe, 1896.

competent critics as an able, conscientious, and thorough guide into the mysteries surrounding the origin, composition, genuineness, and preservation of the writings of the Old Testament.

Shortly after the completion of this translation, Professor Kautzsch agreed to edit, with the collaboration of many German scholars, a rendering of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament. This immense task was accomplished most acceptably, and since the year 1900 we have had a critical and very accurate translation of these Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in two stately volumes.³ In the treatment of the text the editor and his associates have carried out the same principles that underlie the translation of the canonical writings of the Old Testament. It is scarce possible to overestimate the value and importance of this, the really first critical rendering of the vast material which shortly before and after the beginning of our era clustered around the canon of the Old Testament, reproducing for the modern observer a most instructive and vivid picture of the historical and social, the religious and ethical, conditions of the times at which these writings were composed. It is true that in English we have Ball's translation of, and Canon Wace's commentary on, the Apocrypha; but even these are meager and unsatisfactory in comparison with the rich storehouse of learned information found in Kautzsch's edition.

And scarcely had this edition left the press, and been received most enthusiastically on all sides, when the want was generally felt, and the desire expressed by many, that the same work should be done for the Apocrypha of the New Testament, which to the average student, and especially to the busy minister of the gospel, though sufficiently interesting and attractive, were, for the most part, yet a *terra incognita* far removed, of which only occasionally he gathered some scanty information. Consequently, arrangements were made in April, 1900, between Dr. Edgar Hennecke, one of the band of learned and scientifically active German ministers, and Dr. Paul Siebeck, proprietor of the great firm of J. C. B. Mohr, to prepare a German translation, with critical introductions and annotations, of the Apocrypha of the New Testament. This was published

³ *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments*, übersetzt und herausgegeben von E. Kautzsch.

in the beginning of the year 1904⁴—the preface bearing date of July, 1903, just an even two hundred years since Professor Joh. Alb. Fabricius had put out his *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*, which for many years remained the standard text edition of the New Testament Apocrypha then known.

On p. v of the preface the editor had promised shortly to publish also a brief commentary to the translated texts contained in this volume (I), with bibliographies and critical introductions. This companion volume (II) appeared within the same year, 1904,⁵ and the two together contribute a most welcome and indispensable guide into the widely ramified field of the apocryphal literature of the New Testament. For the study of early Christianity, its literature and theology, these volumes are of prime importance. As in the case of the editions of Kautzsch, so also here do we find a general introduction, by the editor, supplemented by special introductions to the individual writings, by him and his fifteen collaborators, among whom we find authorities known also in this country, such as Professors Gerhard Ficker, Gustav Krüger, Erwin Preuschen, Hans von Schubert, and Heinrich Weinel.

In the general introduction to Vol. I Hennecke discusses (1) the history and meaning of the terms “apocryphal” and “canonical” as applied to the writings of the Christian era. New Testament Apocrypha are those writings of the early Christian church, previous to Origen (died 254 A. D.), which constitute the main part of the literature of primitive Christianity and of the time contemporaneous with or immediately following the period of New Testament literature, and exhibit as their authors names of apostles or persons closely connected with them. They claim to be authoritative sources of information concerning the period of Jesus and his apostles in the same measure as the canonical New Testament writings; or assume, at least, to be supplementary continuations of the literary productions contained in the now accepted canon. Among many of the

⁴ *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*. In Verbindung mit Fachgenossen in deutscher Übersetzung und mit Einleitungen herausgegeben von Dr. Edgar Hennecke. Tübingen und Leipzig: Mohr, 1904. Pp. xii+558. M. 6; bd. M. 7.50.

⁵ *Handbuch zu den neutestamentlichen Apokryphen*. In Verbindung mit Fachgelehrten herausgegeben von Dr. Edgar Hennecke. Tübingen: Mohr. Pp. xvi+604. M. 12; bd. M. 13.50.

early churches they were for a time considered authoritative, and as books to be read along with the New Testament writings in public worship—rejected, to be sure, by others and contested vehemently. They are of the greatest importance as sources for our knowledge of the post-apostolic era and the subsequent formative period of the Old Catholic Church. Additional remarks to this paragraph are found in Vol. II, preface, pp. vii–ix and 1–4. The editor next takes up (2) the question of the primitive Christian and apocryphal literature and the time of their composition, a most interesting résumé of the literary, social, and ethical history of the time from shortly before our era to the middle of the third century. (See also Vol. II, pp. 4, 5.) The development of Christianity in post-apostolic times can be understood only by the most careful study of all the elements of public, social, and ethical life, and by an intimate knowledge of the intellectual and religious conditions under which the Græco-Roman world of those days lived. For the history of the church during the second century, its inner development, and its principal heresies, such as Gnosticism, these documents are of vital interest. In a third paragraph the editor sketches briefly the history of the critical study of these writings, and of the editions beginning with that of the Paris professor, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (died 1536). The only English work which, in some measure, compares with this German translation is the supplement volume, by A. Menzies, in the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*. To be sure, Jones's three volumes on *A New and Full Method of Settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament* (London, 1726, 1727) are still useful for the material which Vol. II especially contains. A long list of editions of texts and translations is given also in Hennecke's Vol. II, pp. 5–9.

The two volumes contain each six divisions, every one of which is headed, in turn, by introductory chapters written by the general editor.

A. *Gospels*.—Here we mention translation and critical discussion of a number of the “Sayings of our Lord,” the “Gospel according to the Hebrews,” the “Gospel according to the Egyptians;” the “Ebionite” or “Gospel of the Twelve Apostles”⁶—this last

⁶ Entirely different from *The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles together with the Apocryphes of each one of them*, edited from the Syriac MS by J. R. Harris (Cambridge, 1900), a production of the period after Constantine.

translated and commented by Professor Arnold Meyer, who in Vol. II, pp. 47-71, adds an excellent chapter on "Jesus, the Disciples of Jesus, and the Gospel in Talmud and Related Jewish Writings," giving in terse compactness all the information necessary for an intelligent appreciation of the opinions of Jewish scholars in Talmudic times concerning Jesus and his disciples; prefaced by a carefully selected bibliography. The great rôle which Gnosticism played in the early church has naturally given rise to numerous Gnostic recensions of gospels. The relentless war waged against this very influential heretical section of the early Christian times by the Fathers of the church has caused an almost complete destruction of Gnostic writings, sparing only—as by accident—a few fragments. The "Gospel according to Peter," probably of the beginning of the second century and written in Syria, was published, together with the Apocalypse of the same apostle, by the French scholar M. Bouriant in 1892. The most convenient English edition is by Robinson and James, brought out in 1892. Of peculiar interest to the early Christian believer must have been the narratives of the life of our Lord, especially of those years and events not elucidated by the canonical gospels, viz., his birth and the years of his childhood. Numerous gospels of the infancy sprang up among the churches of every nation embracing the new faith, shortly after the apostolic period had come to a close. Of these we mention here the "Protevangelium Jacobi," or, the "Narrative of James of the birth of Mary the sacred mother of God," the earliest legend of the virgin Mary; and the "History of the childhood years of the Lord" by Thomas, the Israelitish philosopher. Indications point to India as the country where this apocryphal history was composed. It must be remembered also that from early days Thomas was called the "Apostle of India," and the Israelitish philosopher is probably only a later change for the original Indian philosopher, i. e., a Brahman. The "Acts of Pilate" and the "Legend of Abgar, King of Edessa," complete the texts in this first division, to which, in Vol. II, pp. 165-71, a supplement is added on "The New Testament in the Koran," being a collection and critical discussion of all the texts found in the Suras concerning Mary, John the Baptist, Jesus, the forerunner of Mohammed, and the apostles.

There are, as some readers of the *Biblical World* are aware, several modern books dealing with the life of Christ, gathered from extra-canonical gospels. We note especially the book of R. A. Hofmann (Leipzig, 1851), whose author, however, made the mistake of including in the critical apparatus on which his biography rests, a number of later writings of more recent date than even the latest of the New Testament Apocrypha, such as the "Gospel of Nicodemus" and writings attributed to Pilate. What the late General Lew Wallace has published concerning the childhood years of Jesus in his *Ben Hur* and other related writings reminds one most amusingly of the many mediæval German rhyme-chronicles and the so-called mystery-plays in which the birth and childhood history of our Lord is depicted to the admiring assembly of the pious in a most grotesque and misleading manner. The latest contribution is Bernhard Pick's *Extra-canonical Life of Christ* (New York, 1903).

B. *Epistles*.—It was to be expected that this kind of literature could not be as largely represented as the gospel literature, appealing as it did, to a more restricted class of readers or, rather, hearers. Here belong: the so-called first "Epistle of Clement (of Rome) to the Corinthians," the shorter recension of the letters of Ignatius,⁷ and Polycarp's letter to the church at Philippi; also the apocryphal letter of "Paul to the church at Laodicea." As samples of the epistolary literature of the second century of our era these documents are of great importance and worthy of careful consideration. They connect themselves mainly with disciples of the apostles (Clement and Polycarp) or other faithful successors (Ignatius). In style and manner they appear to unite the characteristics of the epistles of Paul the apostle, and of the profane Greek letter literature of that time.

C. *Didactic writings and sermons*.—Most prominent in this division is the so-called "Epistle of Barnabas." This is followed by the "Preaching of Peter" (*κήρυγμα Πέτρου*), to which are added fragments of a "Teaching of Peter" (*doctrina Petri*) quoted also by Origen. The so-called second "Epistle of Clement" (to the Corinthians) is not a letter at all, but rather the earliest known Christian sermon or homily.

⁷ To the churches, respectively, of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Rome, Philadelphia, Smyrna; and to Polycarp.

D. *Church orders or books of discipline*.—First in importance is the famous “Teaching of the Apostles,” discovered by Bryennius and edited so often. For English readers it has been edited most conveniently by the late Philip Schaff. Of the Syriac “Didascalia of the Apostles” no translation and commentary are given; but reference is made to the excellent edition of text and translation by J. Flemming and H. Achelis.⁸

E. *Apocalypses*.—The two centuries preceding and immediately following the beginning of the Christian era have given birth to a large literature of apocalyptic character, the extant Jewish remains of which were published, in translation, in Kautzsch’s edition referred to above. Those belonging to the New Testament period are found on pp. 199–345 of Vol. I of Hennecke’s edition. It is here especially that Jewish and Christian literature meet on common ground and borrow the one from the other whatsoever they can conveniently use for their own purposes. Most of the Jewish apocalypses were remodeled by early Christian writers. Of genuine Christian origin are these: (1) the “Apocalypse of Peter, the Apostle,” a piece of literature whose influence is seen in the mediæval literature of most European nations, culminating and finding its most classic expression in Dante’s *Divina Commedia*. (2) The “Shepherd of Hermas,” with its gorgeous visions, its strict mandates, and its fanciful similitudes. (3) Old Testament pseudepigrapha of Christian origin and content, such as the “Ascension of Isaiah,” so carefully and completely edited by R. H. Charles in 1900; the fifth and sixth books of Ezra,⁹ and the Christian portions of the Sibylline Oracles.¹⁰

F. *Legendary Acts of the Apostles*.—It is here, above all, that we notice the great superiority of the canonical Acts of the Apostles over

⁸ *Die Syrische Didaskalia*, übersetzt und erklärt. (=“Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur,” Neue Folge, Vol. X, Heft 2.) Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1904. Pp. viii + 388. M. 12.50.

⁹ These are the Ezra books: (1) Ezra 1, our canonical book of Ezra; (2) Ezra 2, the book of Nehemiah; (3) Ezra 3, the apocryphal book of Ezra; (4) Ezra 4, the apocryphal book of Ezra 4, chaps. 3–14. These belong to the Old Testament Canon. Of New Testament origin are (5) Ezra 5 = Ezra 4, chaps. 1, 2; and (6) Ezra 6 = Ezra 4, chaps. 15, 16.

¹⁰ Edited by J. Geffcken, to whose complete edition of the corpus of Sibylline Oracles the writer has paid deserved credit in his review in the *American Journal of Theology*, Vol. VII, pp. 336–42.

the apocryphal writings of this kind. Their descriptions run into the grotesque and bizarre, the narratives being honeycombed with most incredulous miraculous performances on the part of the apostles, similar in character to those performed by Jesus according to the accounts of the gospels of the infancy. A great many of these Acts must have perished, leaving us only these few: (1) The "Acts of Paul," originally a work of large dimensions, to which, as the recently discovered Coptic translation proves, belonged the "Acts of Paul and Thecla;" the "Healing of the sick with dropsy in Myra;" "Paul's fight with wild beasts at Ephesus"—a fanciful amplification of the apostle's statement in 1 Cor. 15:32; the "Correspondence between Paul and the Corinthians"—the so-called third epistle to the Corinthians; and the "Martyrdom of Paul." (2) "Acts of Peter," relating his contest with Simon Magus and his martyrdom, being crucified, at his own request, head downward. (3) The "Acts of John," describing the apostle's arrival at, and activity in, Ephesus; his later return from Laodicea to Ephesus and second sojourn there; the apostle's narrative of the life and death of Jesus; and his peaceful end. (4) The "Acts of Andrew," the brother of Peter, of which are preserved only "Andrew in prison at Paträ in Achaia" and "the Crucifixion of Andrew;" but the legend concerning the so-called St. Andrew's cross is a mediæval fiction. (5) The "Acts of Judas Thomas," containing thirteen episodes in the apostle's life and activity as missionary to India, ending with the "Martyrdom of the holy and famous Apostle Thomas." It will be seen that of all these Acts only portions are extant; but it is significant that in all of them is carefully preserved the account of the death of the apostle whose name they bear, especially in case his life ends in martyrdom.

The editors and translators endeavor, in most instances, to determine the date and place of composition of these apocryphal writings, and find that the majority are productions of the second century of our era. A few were originally written in Syriac, most of them in Greek. This Greek text has often been lost, and only translations are extant, based either directly upon the original text or, as in many cases, on first or second translations. Thus, e. g., a present Armenian text may be based on an early Syriac version of the Greek original. In many instances, also, the translations contain inter-

polations inserted by the translator or a later copyist, so that at times one translation has a different text from all the others. The difficulty of determining with such meager helps the original reading of the author's text is greatly enhanced. These texts are at present extant in many languages besides Greek; they are in Syriac, Latin, Coptic, Ethiopic, Sahidic, Armenian, Old Slavic, etc. Thus of the apocryphal correspondence of Paul and the Corinthians the original Greek text has been lost; but we have at least five versions, each differing from the others. The editor and his collaborators have made the best use of all the resources at their command, and are deserving of the highest praise and commendation. The only adverse criticism one could make is that text and introductions, and commentary and bibliography, are printed in separate volumes, necessitating in many instances useless repetitions. It would have been much more serviceable and agreeable to the student if, for instance, the general introductions, together with everything relating to divisions A, B, C, had been combined and published in Vol. I, and the remainder as Vol. II. A translation into English on this plan, we are convinced, will command general attention and a wide circle of readers in this country as well as in England.